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ABSTRACT

Research on women in atypical occupations has generally focused on highly educated women and has neglected to compare atypically employed women to equally educated women in sex-typical occupations. Since the median American worker has only 13.6 years of schooling, the lack of research on the personality characteristics of noncollege-degreed women employees constitutes a serious deficiency. A study was conducted to examine personality profiles of 171 women employed in four female typical occupations (FTO) and two male typical occupations (MTO). The California Psychological Inventory was completed by 131 women in FTOs (licensed practical nurses, registered nurses, hair stylists, secretaries) and 40 women in MTOs (police officers, industrial craftswomen). A stepwise discriminant analysis revealed five personality variables which differentiated very significantly between women in FTO and MTO. Compared to FTO employees, MTO employees were: (1) more dependable, tactful, patient, and realistic (community scale); (2) more aggressive, confident, persistent and planful, and possessive of leadership potential and initiative (dominance scale); (3) less excitable, impulsive, and uninhibited (self-control scale); (4) less shy, conventional, stereotyped in thinking, and restricted in outlook and interests (capacity for status scale); and (5) more outgoing, hard-headed, ambitious, masculine, and restless (femininity scale). (NRB)

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Personality Profiles of Noncollege-degreed Women in Male and Female Typical Occupations

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PERSONALITY PROFILES OF NONCOLLEGE-DEGREED WOMEN
IN MALE AND FEMALE TYPICAL OCCUPATIONS

Abstract

Realizing the need outlined by Lemkau (1983) for studies on personality of women in female typical occupations (FTO) and male typical occupations (MTO), the present study examined personality profiles of 171 women employed in four FTO and two MTO using the California Psychological Inventory (CPI). A stepwise discriminant analysis showed that five scales differentiated between women employed in the two categories. These were communality, capacity for status, dominance, self control, and femininity. Recommendations for future research, and implications for industry administrators and public policy-makers were outlined.

PERSONALITY PROFILES OF NONCOLLEGE-DEGREED WOMEN IN MALE AND FEMALE TYPICAL OCCUPATIONS

The importance of the present study stems from the interactions of three labor force characteristics. These are: (1) a persisting occupational segregation by sex leading to female typical occupations (FTO) and male typical occupations (MTO); (2) increasing rates of female participating and remaining in the labor force; and (3) a limited educational level attained by the median worker, 13.6 years of schooling (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1980). Yet, our knowledge of the personality characteristics of female workers in FTO and MTO who are in this median group of limited educational attainment is extremely limited, if it at all exists.

Lemkau (1979, 1983) reviewed the 1930-1976 literature on women in MTO and noted that they possess some distinct personality characteristics. However, Lemkau (1983) also observed several factors which limit the external validity of such research:

> First, research on women already employed in atypical occupations has generally focused on the characteristics of women with high levels of education...Second,...no study has compared a group of atypically employed women to a group of equally educated women in sextypical fields (p. 146).

Given that the median American worker has only 13.6 years of schooling, the lack of research on the personality characteristics of the majority of noncollege-degreed female workers constitute a serious deficiency in this literature. Thus, the present exploratory study was designed to highlight the need for appropriate research programs which assess in a systematic fashion the personality profiles and various background factors of this neglected segment of the labor force, noncollege-degreed women employed in FTO and MTO.

Method

Sample

Data were collected from 171 women employed in four FTO occupations (47 licensed practical nurses, 9 registered nurses, 21 hair stylists, and 54 secretaries) and two MTO occupations (26 police officers and 14 industrial craftswomen). All occupations required approximately two years of schooling after high school and thus represented the median labor force worker in education. Each participant was paid $10 for completing the study.

Measure

Personality characteristics of the 131 women in FTO and the 40 women in MTO were compared on the 18 scales (480 items) of the California Psychological Inventory (CPI - Gough, 1975). The CPI was used for its acceptable psychometric properties and comprehensiveness and because it has been used in previous research in various employment situations such as police selection and performance (James, Campbell, and Lovegrove, 1984).

Data Analysis

To minimize investigation-wise type I error, a MANOVA was first conducted to test the presence of differences among personality profiles of women in the six specific occupations. Second, another MANOVA was performed to detect any differences between the personalities of women in FTO and MTO. Finally, based on the results from the second MANOVA, a stepwise discriminant analysis was performed to find out the variables which differentiated significantly among women employed in FTO and MTO.

Results and Discussion

Results from the first MANOVA showed that personality differences among women employed in the six specific occupations do exist ($p < .005$). These differences remained significant ($p < .015$) even after grouping participants into the two general FTO and MTO categories. In both analyses, however, groups were never significantly different on all 18 scales of the CPI. As shown in Figure 1, although differences on several scales exist in varying degrees, the difference on the femininity scale (Fe) is the most pronounced.

Table 1 presents results from the stepwise discriminant analysis applied to 80% of the sample. Five personality variables differentiated very significantly ($p < .0004$) between women in FTO and MTO. These are circled in Figure 1. When the coefficients of these variables were used to cross validate the results on the 20% hold-out sample, they successfully classified 64% of the FTO and 100% of the MTO women workers.

According to the above results noncollege-degreed women in MTO were seen as different from women in FTO in several capacities. These women employed in atypical occupations were: (1) more dependable, tactful, patient, and realistic (communality scale - Cm); (2) more aggressive, confident, persistent and planful, and possessive of leadership potential and initiative (dominance scale - Do); (3) less excitable, impulsive, and uninhibited (self-control scale - Sc); (4) less shy, conventional, stereo-typed in thinking, and restricted in outlook and interests (capacity for status scale - Cs); and (5) more outgoing, hard-headed, ambitious, masculine, and restless (femininity scale - Fe). It should be noted, however, that the femininity characteristic as measured in the CPI has been criticized for not accounting for androgyny. Bem (1974) suggested that one can be feminine, masculine, or both depending on the situation. Thus, we do not

conclusively know whether women in FTO showed more femininity characteristics because their respective occupations so required, or because this characteristic is enduring and engrained in their personalities.

Nevertheless, the above findings are illuminating. Distinctive personality characteristics found among women in previous research (e.g., Bachtold, 1976) have been challenged by Lemkau (1983) as highly influenced by academic achievement. When Lemkan (1983) studied FTO and MTO women who had equal education, master degree, the number of distinguishing personality characteristics diminished.

The current study shows that differences between personality profiles of women employed in FTO and MTO do exist. Unlike Lemkau's (1983) study in which high education levels were examined, the uniformal educational level studied here was lower--14 years of schooling. It is possible that higher educational attainments are themselves male-dominated fields, and thus women who attain them may be more similar than dissimilar. Future research may examine with experimental and statistical rigor whether educational levels moderate the presence of personality and background differences among women in FTO and MTO.

The current findings should be of interests to academics, public policy-makers, and industrial administrators. For example, finding that FTO and MTO women possess distinct personalities may facilitate industrial recruitment and selection. For policy-makers, on the other hand, the greater assertiveness of women in MTO can be seen as facilitating passage through and negotiation of educational and employment barriers. Training programs in these directions can thus make the outcomes of social programs such as affirmative action and equal employment opportunity more genuine.

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Table 1

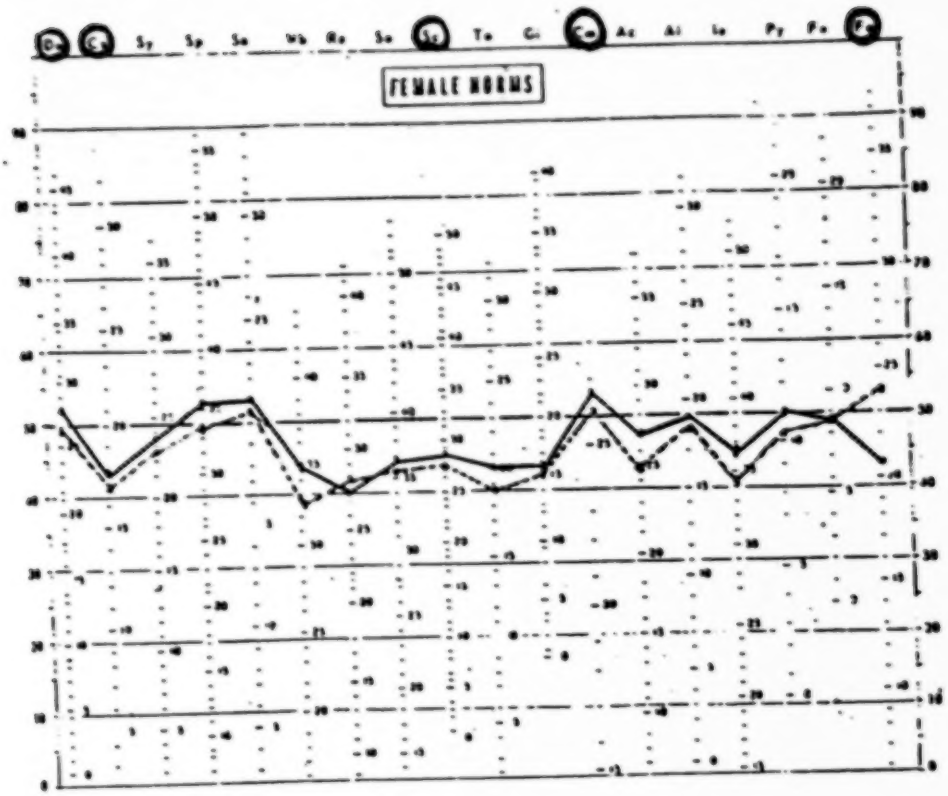
Stepwise Discriminant Function* for the CPI (20% hold-out sample)

Step Order	Personality Scale	Discriminant Coefficient	F
1	Femininity (Fe)	.9397	.0001
2	Communality (Cm)	-.3955	.0001
3	Self Control (Sc)	.5308	.0002
4	Capacity for Status (Cs)	-.3618	.0002
5	Dominance (Do)	.3580	.0004

*$p < .0004$

Figure 1

Overall Personality Profiles
of Women in FTO and MTO



---------- FTO
———— MTO

Note: Discriminant Scales are circled

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